



Local News

Air in Grand Prairie neighborhood to be tested for contaminant TCE

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Environmental Protection Agency representatives will take air samples this week in a Grand Prairie neighborhood sitting above groundwater contaminated with a noxious liquid.

The agency will study the potential vapor intrusion into homes of trichloroethylene, or TCE, a carcinogenic liquid used to clean grease off metal. The homes are near the former Delfasco Forge site at 114 N.E. 28th St.

"We want to make sure it's not coming up through the soil and getting into living spaces," said Rick Ehrhart, an EPA corrective action coordinator.

EPA officials said there wasn't an immediate need to test the site, but they wanted to gather more data.

Tests show TCE used at the site has seeped into the groundwater. The groundwater plume is 1,100 feet wide and 2,650 feet long, submerged under an area spanning more than 65 acres and sitting under about 100 homes.

Delfasco Forge, a contract metal fabrication and forging manufacturer, operated at the site from 1981 until 1998. The company now leases the property to an automotive repair business.

Philip Kadlecek, president of Delfasco Inc., told the Grand Prairie City Council in November that he didn't know when contamination occurred but said he believed it was before Delfasco owned the property.

According to documents released by the Grand Prairie environmental services department, the concentrations of TCE in the plume and soil have been shown to be above the residential limits set by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. It is not known, however, whether residents have been exposed to levels of TCE that would cause health problems.

TCE has been known to affect the nervous system and damage the liver and lungs, according to the Department of Health and Human Services Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. In people exposed to high levels in drinking water or air over long periods, TCE is considered a likely carcinogenic.

The area's contamination has been a concern among property owners.

A civil liability lawsuit filed in June 2006 by 22 property owners in district court in Dallas claims that Delfasco knowingly used TCE even though it was poisonous. Plaintiffs seek recovery of loss of market value to the property and the costs of remediation.

That case was originally scheduled to be heard this spring, but no hearings have been set and no other information was available. Calls to the plaintiff's attorney were not returned.

According to the initial filing, "Plaintiffs are now concerned about continuing to live with their families on land connected to an underground lake of poisoned water."

According to the filing, Delfasco denies the allegations.

The EPA recently held a public meeting to recruit 20 property owners to take part in the vapor study. The sampling will last a week. It usually takes about two months to get results back, Mr. Ehrhart said.

The process to test the air underneath homes is simple and not intrusive, Mr. Ehrhart said. Most of the homes sit on pier-and-beam foundations. Canisters will be placed under the homes between the ground and floor for 24 hours. They will then be sent off for testing.

Another public meeting will be called to share that information with residents when the data is available.

Mr. Ehrhart said that if vapors are found, steps can be taken to purify the air.